

University of Groningen

He works outside the home, she drinks coffee and does the dishes

Emons, P.; Wester, F.; Scheepers, P.

Published in:
Journal of Broadcasting and Electronic Media

DOI:
[10.1080/08838150903550386](https://doi.org/10.1080/08838150903550386)

IMPORTANT NOTE: You are advised to consult the publisher's version (publisher's PDF) if you wish to cite from it. Please check the document version below.

Document Version
Publisher's PDF, also known as Version of record

Publication date:
2010

[Link to publication in University of Groningen/UMCG research database](#)

Citation for published version (APA):

Emons, P., Wester, F., & Scheepers, P. (2010). He works outside the home, she drinks coffee and does the dishes: gender roles in fiction programs on Dutch television. *Journal of Broadcasting and Electronic Media*, 54(1), 40-53. <https://doi.org/10.1080/08838150903550386>

Copyright

Other than for strictly personal use, it is not permitted to download or to forward/distribute the text or part of it without the consent of the author(s) and/or copyright holder(s), unless the work is under an open content license (like Creative Commons).

The publication may also be distributed here under the terms of Article 25fa of the Dutch Copyright Act, indicated by the "Taverne" license. More information can be found on the University of Groningen website: <https://www.rug.nl/library/open-access/self-archiving-pure/taverne-amendment>.

Take-down policy

If you believe that this document breaches copyright please contact us providing details, and we will remove access to the work immediately and investigate your claim.

Downloaded from the University of Groningen/UMCG research database (Pure): <http://www.rug.nl/research/portal>. For technical reasons the number of authors shown on this cover page is limited to 10 maximum.



Journal of Broadcasting & Electronic Media

Publication details, including instructions for authors and subscription information:

<http://www.tandfonline.com/loi/hbem20>

"He Works Outside the Home; She Drinks Coffee and Does the Dishes" Gender Roles in Fiction Programs on Dutch Television

Pascale Emons M.A. and Ph.D.^a, Fred Wester Ph.D.^b & Peer Scheepers Ph.D.^c

^a Department of Communication, Radboud University of Nijmegen, The Netherlands

^b Department of Communication, Radboud University of Nijmegen

^c Radboud University of Nijmegen

Version of record first published: 05 Mar 2010

To cite this article: Pascale Emons M.A. and Ph.D., Fred Wester Ph.D. & Peer Scheepers Ph.D. (2010): "He Works Outside the Home; She Drinks Coffee and Does the Dishes" Gender Roles in Fiction Programs on Dutch Television, Journal of Broadcasting & Electronic Media, 54:1, 40-53

To link to this article: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/08838150903550386>

PLEASE SCROLL DOWN FOR ARTICLE

Full terms and conditions of use: <http://www.tandfonline.com/page/terms-and-conditions>

This article may be used for research, teaching, and private study purposes. Any substantial or systematic reproduction, redistribution, reselling, loan,

sub-licensing, systematic supply, or distribution in any form to anyone is expressly forbidden.

The publisher does not give any warranty express or implied or make any representation that the contents will be complete or accurate or up to date. The accuracy of any instructions, formulae, and drug doses should be independently verified with primary sources. The publisher shall not be liable for any loss, actions, claims, proceedings, demand, or costs or damages whatsoever or howsoever caused arising directly or indirectly in connection with or arising out of the use of this material.

“He Works Outside the Home; She Drinks Coffee and Does the Dishes” Gender Roles in Fiction Programs on Dutch Television

Pascale Emons, Fred Wester, and Peer Scheepers

Using a sample of 503 prime-time fiction programs broadcast on Dutch television between 1980 and 2005, the study compared gender portrayals in programs produced in the US with Dutch programs. It revealed more older males, more females involved in childcare, more males in paid employment, and fewer males involved in other activities in American than in Dutch programs. Over time, television appears to resist changes regarding greater equality of gender roles in Dutch society. However, there seems to be a convergence in the share, the age distribution, and the sexual orientation of male and female characters in fiction programs on Dutch television.

Television programming portrays male and female characters in various roles and settings. In the United States, it is seen as the main cultural storyteller. Gerbner and colleagues (1976, 2002) consider television a message system telling culturally relevant stories, myths, and lessons which cultivate “basic assumptions about the ‘facts’ of life and standards of judgements on which conclusions are based” (Gerbner & Gross, 1976, p. 175). Television fiction in particular contributes to the socialization of individuals in society, and may teach viewers about sex role stereotyping (Signorielli & Bacue, 1999; Signorielli & Kahlenberg, 2001).

Television may also function as a cultural storyteller in the Netherlands. Almost every household in the Netherlands has a TV set. People watch an average of

Pascale Emons (M.A., Radboud University, Nijmegen) is a Ph.D. candidate in the Department of Communication at the Radboud University of Nijmegen, The Netherlands. Her research interests include visual media content.

Fred Wester (Ph.D., Radboud University, Nijmegen) is a full professor in the Department of Communication at the Radboud University of Nijmegen. His research interests include media narratives and qualitative research methods.

Peer Scheepers (Ph.D., Radboud University, Nijmegen) is a full professor of Research Methodology at the Radboud University of Nijmegen. His research interests include (explanations for) longitudinal and cross-national differences regarding social attitudes and behavior.

12 hours of TV a week, more time than is spent on personal communication (Huysmans, de Haan, & van den Broek, 2004, p. 195). Many programs on Dutch television are produced in the United States; De Bens and De Smaele speak about "Dallasification," referring to the dominant position of American fiction on European TV (2001, p. 52). In the Netherlands, commercial channels, which broadcast more fiction than public channels, also broadcast more American programs (De Bens & De Smaele, 2001).

Because "every country's television system reflects the historical, political, social, economic, and cultural contexts within which it has developed" (Gerbner, Gross, Jackson-Beeck, & Signorielli, 1978, p. 178), the content of Dutch and U.S. television fiction on Dutch television may differ. However, Dutch broadcasters may select American programs resembling Dutch productions; after all, media organizations wanting a large audience may choose American programs more in line with Dutch audience desires.

This study hopes to shed light on gender role differences between the US and Dutch programs. In some respects, the United States and the Netherlands are on different sides of the "gender-equality spectrum," making a cross-cultural comparison and a study of the extent to which gender roles in society are reflected on Dutch television interesting. Compared to other European countries and the United States, the Netherlands has fewer women in senior management positions (Grant Thornton International Business Owners Survey, 2004) and as university professors (Stichting de Beauvoir & VSNU, 2006). However, Dutch opinions on the division of labor and the role of women in society in general became more liberal as more women entered the workforce, and men became more ready to spend time on household chores and childcare (Niphuis-Nell, 1997). More Dutch people hold a non-traditional view¹ on the role of women (70% in 1979, 85% from 1995–2005). Furthermore, the Netherlands is a world leader with respect to accepting homosexuality and providing equal rights to lesbians and gay men. The World Value Survey conducted in 80 countries showed that Dutch society has the most people (78%) who think that homosexuality is legitimate, almost twice as much as in the US (Keuzenkamp & Bos, 2007).

Is this growing equality of gender and sexual orientation in Dutch society reflected in Dutch prime time television fiction? The possible association between changes in gender roles in TV fiction and Dutch society is explored here.

Gender Roles in American and Dutch Fiction Television Content

Previous content analyses of gender portrayals on American and Dutch fiction television found that both men and women are presented in gender stereotyped ways, based on their relative presence, their activities and their age.

Although there are differences between genres and across broadcasters, both American (Greenberg, 1980; McNeil, 1975; Seggar, 1975; Seggar, Hafen & Han-

nonen-Gladen, 1981) and Dutch (Boeke & Kuipers, 1993; Bouwman, 1987; Eie, 1998; Koeman, Peeters, & D'Haenens, 2007; NPO, 2008; Sterk & Van Dijk, 2003) studies of the presence of men and women in television indicate that female characters are underrepresented in relation to their proportion of the population, and in relation to their male counterparts on television. However, American (Elasmar, Hasegawa & Brain, 1999; Glascock, 2001; Greenberg & Colette, 1997; Signorielli & Bacue, 1999; Vande Berg & Streckfuss, 1992) and Dutch (NPO, 2008) studies found that the proportion of female characters on TV fiction increases over time.

American studies found that despite developments suggesting a more equal depiction of occupational roles through time, male characters still work outside the house more often, have a wider range of jobs and have higher status and higher-paying occupations than female characters. Television women are still underrepresented in relation to their number in the U.S. work force (Atkin, Moorman, & Lin, 1991; Elasmar et al., 1999; Glascock, 2001; Greenberg & Collette, 1997; Lauzen, Dozier, & Horan, 2008; McNeil, 1975; Signorielli & Bacue, 1999, Signorielli & Kahlenberg, 2001; Vande Berg & Streckfuss, 1992). A Dutch study found that male characters' activities in prime time fiction programs focus on their profession, or are divided between their work and home situation; female characters focus on household and care chores, or they divide these activities with their work. Gender differences or the role patterns of men and women are a subject in one in five Dutch programs (NPO, 2008).

Age is also a factor. Female characters in Dutch (Koeman et al., 2007; Sterk & Van Dijk, 2003) and American television (Davis, 1990; Glascock, 2001; Greenberg, 1980; Signorielli & Bacue, 1999) remain younger than male characters, and younger females and older males are relatively overrepresented.

Fisher, Hill, Grube and Gruber (2007) found that sexual content related to non-heterosexuals was present in around 15% of U.S. programs broadcast in 2001 to 2003. As far as the authors know, there are no similar studies of Dutch television.

To support comparisons with previous studies, these variables were investigated. Unlike the present study, most previous studies did not focus on gender portrayals in television fiction in an historical or cross-cultural perspective, or explore an association between roles of men and women in society, and the depiction of these roles in television. The research questions are:

- RQ₁: To what extent do fiction programs produced in the Netherlands portray gender roles differently from U.S. produced programs broadcast on Dutch television?
- RQ₂: To what extent are there longitudinal changes in the portrayal of gender roles in fiction broadcast on Dutch television between 1980 and 2005?
- RQ₃: Is there an association between these changes and attitudes toward the roles of men and women in Dutch society?

Method

Sample

Trend analyses of television content data from 1980, 1985, 1990, 1995, 2000, and 2005 were conducted. The clustered samples consisted of fiction programs broadcast at the beginning of fall during prime time (19.00 to 23.00 hours) on all Dutch public and private networks. Fiction programs included all programs with a story line, such as (situation) comedies, movies and soaps. If more than half of the program aired during prime time, it was included in the sample. Early autumn is the period in which broadcasting companies traditionally start new series and are representative of the programs aired in the rest of the television season (Bouwman, Meier, & Nelissen, 1987). The samples in 1980 and 1985 consist of fiction programs broadcast on two Dutch networks (Nederland 1 and 2) during a period of 4 weeks. Because of the increase in the number of Dutch television channels,² the number of weeks included in the 1990, and 1995 to 2005 samples were reduced to 2 weeks and 1 week, respectively. The sample includes 503 fiction programs comprising 392 hours of programming. There were 163 Dutch programs, 253 from the United States, and 87 from other countries.

Variables in the Codebook

The authors tested and retested all variables extensively, and developed categories which were exhaustive, mutually exclusive, and had an appropriate level of measurement (Neuendorf, 2002, p. 118). Up to eight human main characters per program were coded. A main character is identified as the player of a leading role and the carrier of a storyline, who follows a "narrative cycle" (Wester & Weijers, 2006, p. 163). Five variables related to the main characters, such as gender, age, sexual orientation, activities related to a job, and/or household and childcare activities were coded. Age categories reflected life cycles: 0–12 (child), 13–18 (adolescent), 19–29 (young adult), 30–64 (adult), and 65 and up (senior). Sexual orientation was coded as "heterosexual," "lesbian, gay or bisexual," "unknown," and "unable to determine." Activities were "related to a job," "related to household chores (exclusive childcare activities)," "divided between job and household chores," "other activities, not related to a job or household chores," and "unable to determine." Activities related to a job or housekeeping had priority above "other activities." For example, if a character does the dishes (household chores) and drinks coffee with friends (other activities), the activity was classified as "household." Childcare referred to children under 18, and had to be related to the private lives of the characters, and not to their jobs.

As noted earlier, more Dutch people hold a non-traditional view of the role of women. The authors also coded whether emancipation (the allocation of, or the fight for equal rights for men and women) was present as a theme in the programs—

for example, a storyline about whether taking out the garbage is a man's job. A theme has meaning for story development, or it may motivate characters' actions and thus influence story development. General program characteristics, such as length, country and year of production were coded. The unit of analysis for the main characters was each single main character in the program, and the unit of analysis for the theme was the whole program.

Recording and Intercoder Reliability

Data were recorded by 19 undergraduate communication students and the first author of this article. All coders received at least 14 hours of training. In the 503 programs in the sample, 2,117 main characters were identified independently by the first coders. Around 40% of the programs and the main characters were coded twice. Intercoder reliability tests using Holsti's method (Neuendorf, 2002, p. 149) indicated an acceptable level of agreement on most of the content to be categorized. The reliability coefficient for gender, age, sexual orientation, childcare, and activities related to a job or household was .97, .78, .85, .95 and .77, respectively; for the emancipation theme, it was .95.

Results

Gendered Differences in and Between Dutch, American, and Other Fiction Programs

The sample contained 2,104 human main characters. As one character's gender was unclear, it was removed from the analysis. For every three men in fiction programs broadcast in the Netherlands, there were only two women.

The male-female distribution in Dutch and American programs is fairly comparable, around 58% versus 42%. The gender distribution in other than Dutch and American programs is even more unequal: for every seven men, the television audience could see only three women (see Table 1).

As seen in Table 2, Chi-square tests yielded significant results for all variables regarding the total number of male and female characters. Furthermore, there were some significant differences between male characters in Dutch and American programs in terms of age (χ^2 ($N = 1022$) = 20.82; $df = 4$; $p < .001$) and activities (χ^2 ($N = 1023$) = 18.73; $df = 3$; $p < .001$). There were significant differences between female characters in Dutch and American programs in terms of age (χ^2 ($N = 738$) = 10.47; $df = 4$; $p < .05$), and childcare activities (χ^2 ($N = 740$) = 6.25; $df = 1$; $p < .05$).

Overall, there were more adult males (69.4%) than females (58.7%), and more young adult females (28.1%) than males (19.3%). Accordingly, male characters were relatively older than female characters, especially in American programs, where

Table 1
Distribution of Male and Female Characters in Dutch, American and
Other Fiction Programs Broadcast on Dutch Television

	Total	Dutch Programs	U.S. Programs	Other Programs
Male	59.6%	57.5%	58.4%	68.0%
Female	40.4%	42.5%	41.6%	32.0%
	100%	100%	100%	100%
	(<i>N</i> = 2104)	(<i>N</i> = 722)	(<i>N</i> = 1044)	(<i>N</i> = 338)

Note: Total: χ^2 (*N* = 2104) = 11.96; *df* = 2; *p* < .01.

Table 2
Male and Female Characters in Dutch, American, and
Other Fiction Programs on Dutch Television (%)

Variables	Total		Dutch Programs		American Programs		Other Programs	
	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F
Age ^a								
0–12	3.0	3.1	3.9	.7	2.5	4.4**	2.6	4.6**
13–18	5.3	6.1	4.1	6.9	4.9	5.3	8.3*	7.4
19–29	19.3	28.1	24.3	29.4	15.8**	27.3	19.2	27.8
30–64	69.4	58.7	62.4	58.2	74.1**	59.3	69.4	58.3
65+	3.1	3.9	5.3	4.9	2.6*	3.7	.4**	1.9
Sexual orientation ^b								
Heterosexual	62.2	76.1	65.1	74.3	63.9	77.2	52.2**	76.6
Lesbian/gay/bi-	2.7	1.2	2.9	1.6	3.0	.7	1.7	1.9
Unknown	35.1	22.8	32.0	24.1	33.1	22.1	46.1**	21.5
Childcare ^c	6.5	13.0	6.3	10.1	8.0	16.6*	2.6*	6.5
Activities ^d								
Job	52.4	33.3	43.6	33.6	56.7**	30.6	57.0**	43.5
Household	2.3	10.4	3.4	11.7	1.6	9.7	2.2	9.3
Job & household	1.4	5.3	1.2	4.2	1.3	6.9	2.2	1.9
Other activities	43.8	51.0	51.8	50.5	40.3**	52.8	38.7**	45.4

Note: ^aTotal: χ^2 (*N* = 2097) = 27.76; *df* = 5; *p* < .001.

^bTotal: χ^2 (*N* = 2103) = 45.84; *df* = 2; *p* < .001.

^cTotal: χ^2 (*N* = 2103) = 26.03; *df* = 1; *p* < .001.

^dTotal: χ^2 (*N* = 2102) = 131.02; *df* = 3; *p* < .001.

Results of χ^2 tests between Dutch and American programs, and Dutch and other programs, within same sex characters:

**p* < .05

***p* < .01.

74.1% of the males were between 30 and 64 years old, compared to 59.3% of their female counterparts.

There were significant differences between the sexual orientation of male and female characters. Overall, 62.2% of male characters were heterosexual, compared to 76.1% of female characters. The sexual orientation of 35.1% of the male and 22.8% of the female characters was unknown. Lesbians, gay men or bisexual women or men were almost nonexistent.

There were more female than male characters involved in childcare (overall, 13% and 6.5%). Compared to the other programs, more female characters in American programs (16.6%) took care of children, slightly higher (13.3%) than Elasmr et al. (1999) found earlier.

Around half of all male characters (52.4%) and only 33.3% of the female characters were depicted at work. Portrayals of household chores were few; 10.4% of female and 2.3% of male characters engaged in activities related to the household. Half of the female characters (51%) relatively more than were male characters (43.8%), were involved in "other activities." Compared to male characters in programs produced in the United States and other countries, Dutch programs portrayed relatively fewer males (43.6%) at work, and more (51.8%) in combination with other activities.

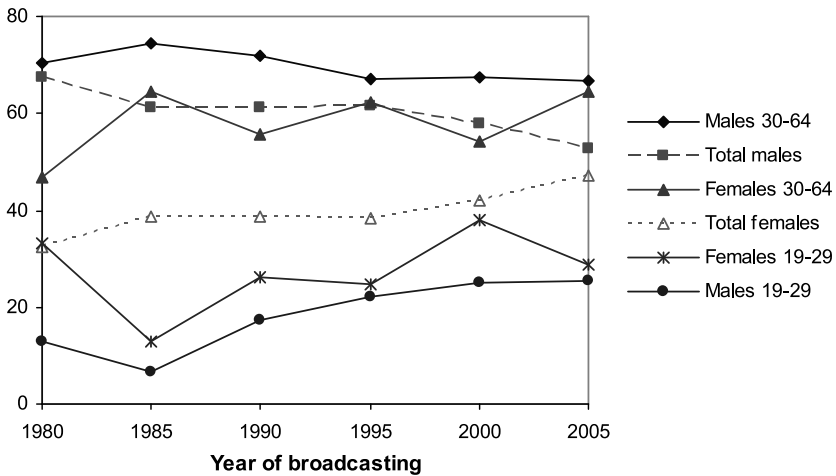
Emancipation was marginally present as a theme, in about 4% of programs. Chi-square tests did not show significant differences between Dutch, American and other programs.

Changes in the Portrayal of Gender in Fiction Television and the Relation With Dutch Society

Figure 1 shows some clear trends ($\chi^2 = 15.76$; $df = 5$; $p < .01$) with regard to the male-female distribution in fiction programs broadcast between 1980 and 2005.

The proportion of males is seen to be decreasing (from 68% to 53%), while the proportion of females is increasing (from 33% to 47%). In Dutch society, there are slightly more women than men. Figure 1 represents longitudinal changes in the two most common age groups of characters on fiction television programs: 19–29 (young adults) and 30–64 olds (adults) as well. The proportion of young adult males increased from 7% in 1985 to a 25% of all male characters in 2005 ($\chi^2 = 32.17$; $df = 5$; $p < .001$). Young adults female characters increased between 1985 and 2000 ($\chi^2 = 22.04$; $df = 5$; $p < .01$). The authors concluded that the character population became younger. The proportion of adult males decreased slowly from 75% in 1985 to 67% in 2005, but this decrease was non-significant. The proportion of females between 30–64 years old fluctuated between 47% and 64%; but the authors did not detect a clear trend. Although male characters were relatively older than female characters, there seemed to be a convergence between the age of the two genders in television. The authors found differences between the age of the characters in television fiction and the age of people in Dutch society

Figure 1
Trends Related to the Distribution of Male and Female Characters (1980–2005, %) and Young Adults and Adults Amongst Male and Female Characters in Fiction Programs on Dutch Television (1980–2005, % Within Gender)

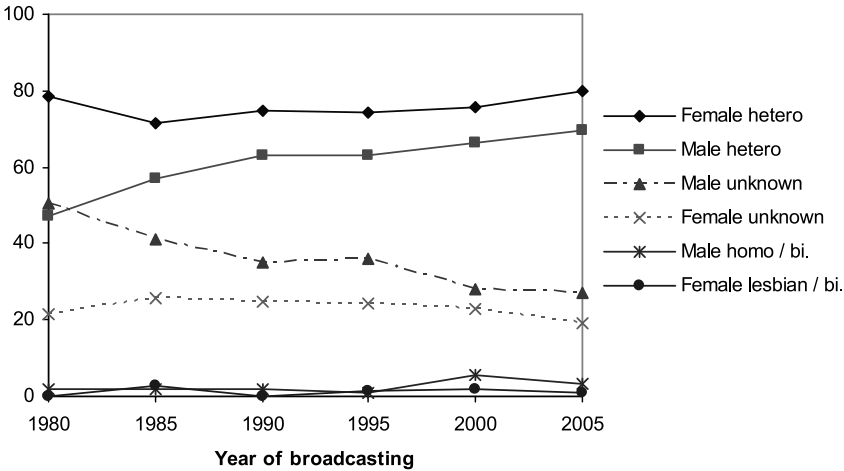


(see <http://statline.cbs.nl>). Children (0–12 years) are underrepresented on television. About 16% of the Netherlands population is aged 0–12 years, as compared to only 3% on television. The proportion of adolescents (13–18) on television comes closest to reality: there are slightly more adolescents in society than on television. The representation of young adults (19–29) shows a gender typed difference. Females between 19 and 29 are overrepresented (28% of TV women; 16% of Dutch population). However, the number of males between 19 and 29 on television more closely reflects Dutch society. The age group 30–64 reflects gender differences: females are overrepresented (59% on TV; 45% in society); males are even more overrepresented (69% vs. 47%). Lastly, only about 3% of all characters are an older person, whereas the number of senior people in society is three (men) to five (women) times larger.

Figure 2 shows that the sexual orientation of male characters changed considerably ($\chi^2 = 40.43$; $df = 10$; $p < .001$). Men's roles became less indeterminate: in 1980, the sexual orientation of half of the men was unknown, in 2005 this decreased to a third. The share of heterosexual male characters increased from half to almost 70%. The sexual orientation of females appears stable (Fischer's Exact Test = 8.06; $p = ns$). The majority of female characters (76%) were known to be heterosexual, with only about 20% indeterminate. The differences between the (familiarity with the) sexual orientation of male and female characters seems to diminish in time. However, lesbian, gay or bi-sexual characters remain almost invisible.

The proportion of male characters taking care of children increased slightly from 2% to 9% ($\chi^2 = 10.51$; $df = 5$; $p = ns$). There were ups and downs in the proportion

Figure 2
Sexual Orientation of Male and Female Characters in Fiction Programs on Dutch Television (1980–2005, % Within Gender)



of female characters who take care of children (7% in 1980, 16% in 2005, $\chi^2 = 7.62$; $df = 5$; $p = ns$). In Dutch society, the time spent by men and women on childcare increased slightly between 1975 and 2000. By 2000, women spent on average 5 hours a week on childcare, while men were occupied with their children 2 hours a week (SCP, 1975–2000). Although the amount of time spent on childcare in Dutch society is increasing, the proportion of men and women in Dutch society who take care of children decreased. In both television and in society, the proportion of women taking care of children is higher than men. Caring parents are more frequent in society than on television, but the differences in these trends seem to decrease over time.

Between 1980 and 2005, the proportion of males on television whose activities were related to a paid job fluctuated between 42% and 58% ($\chi^2 = 11.02$; $df = 5$; $p = ns$). The proportion of females working outside the home stayed between 27% in 1980 and 40% in 2000 ($\chi^2 = 7.76$; $df = 5$; $p = ns$), but there was no clear trend through the years. In the Netherlands, the proportion of both men and women who have a job increased. However, the proportion of men who have a job is still higher than that of women (Breedveld et al., 2006). Furthermore, over the years, there have been relatively more males in society who work, compared to their counterparts on television. There are more working women on television than in society in the 1980s and the first half of the 1990s. From then on, working women are underrepresented on television. Television seems to show a resistance to change in the representation of the proportion of working men and women. The proportion of male characters doing household chores (on average 2%) stayed at a low, fairly constant level ($\chi^2 =$

7.05; $df = 3$; $p = ns$). Although the Chi-square was not significant, the proportion of female characters doing household chores decreased from 12% in 1980 to 8% in 2005 ($\chi^2 = 5.45$; $df = 3$; $p = ns$). In Dutch society, nearly all women do something in the household; this does not change over time. However, relatively more men began doing household chores. Between 1975 and 2000, their proportion increased from 75% to 90%. Although the "household-gap" between the genders decreased, more women were still active in the household. This holds true in television: more women than men were seen dusting and cleaning the house, but this difference decreased over time.

Emancipation was not a frequent theme. On average, a fairly stable 4% of the programs showed this subject (Fisher's Exact Test = 2.70; $p = ns$). There was no clear association with the increasing share of people in Dutch society between 1979 and 1995 who have a non-traditional view of women's roles.

Conclusion and Discussion

In contrast to previous studies on gender portrayals in fiction television, this study has a cross-cultural, longitudinal and comparative focus. There were some significant differences between the gender roles of characters in American and Dutch programs broadcast on Dutch television. Compared to Dutch programs, American programs had more adult males, more females involved in childcare, more males involved in a job, and fewer males involved in other activities. Thus, American programs on Dutch television may be more gender-stereotyped than the Dutch programs. However, the programs produced by the two countries did not differ significantly in the extent to which they included the emancipation theme. The differences between American and Dutch programs imply that a resemblance between the program content is not necessarily a precondition for Dutch media organizations to select American programs. However, it is too far fetched to state that Dutch programmers select an un-representative sample of U.S. fiction programs for the local audience, since it is difficult to determine what programs exactly represent the U.S. programs. Kuipers (2008) compared the import of American television series in Italy, France, Poland, and the Netherlands. Cultural- or linguistic distance between the United States and the importing European countries appeared not to be an important factor regarding differences between the four countries in the amount and the nature of the U.S. programs that they broadcast. In contrast, Kuipers found that the differences in U.S. imports partly depend upon the countries' media landscapes: the role of the state and its rules (e.g., France has a quota for national and foreign produced television programs), the method of translation (dubbing or subtitles), and the number of networks (and their competitiveness). The advent of commercial television led to an enormous increase of American series. Kuipers (2008) states that through long-term exposure, the Dutch audience became familiar with American programs, thus creating a market in the Netherlands.

Cultivation studies show that television is an ideologically conservative medium. According to Gerbner and Gross, "it is an agency of the established order and serves primarily to extend and maintain rather than alter, threaten or weaken conventional conceptions, beliefs and behaviors. Its chief cultural function is to spread and stabilize social patterns, to cultivate not change but *resistance to change*" (1976, p. 175). The gender gap regarding the *activities* of male and female characters in television fiction was almost as wide as it was 25 years ago; compared to female characters, males are more often involved in paid work, and more females are involved in childcare, the household (although differences between the sexes with regard to household chores seem to diminish slightly), and other activities. Thus, it could be said that in television fiction "he works outside the home, she drinks coffee and does the dishes." This contrasts with changes in Dutch society, in which women enter the workforce. In some respects, television resists reflecting the more equal gender roles in Dutch society. This also appears from the fairly stable and marginal depiction of emancipation as a program theme.

However, in conclusion, it can be said that there is a convergence in the percentage, the age distribution, and the sexual orientation of male and female characters on Dutch television. Over the years, the number of male characters decreased, and the number of female characters increased, and differences between the share of young adult, adult male, and female characters seem to disappear slowly. In 2005, the sexual orientation of male characters showed more similarities with those of today's female characters than with the males of 25 years earlier. This may suggest that storylines involving these characters may be shifting from, for example, action-oriented plots or workplace storylines, to more romantic plots. However, according to Davis (1990), "women are much more defined in their roles where men are much indeterminate. . . . The lack of definition allows male characters much more freedom of movement and behaviour" (p. 331). Thus it is also possible that the nature of the storylines does not necessarily change, but that in comparable storylines, the vagueness around the sexual orientation of male characters in fiction programs may gradually come to an end, and that differences between the sexual orientation of male and female characters may become less gender-stereotyped. Further research could study which of the two possibilities is more realistic. Overall, the convergence between male and female characters was attributed to changes in the portrayal of males. To sum up, despite some progress and consistent with cultivation theory, it was found that Dutch television fiction shows resistance to change regarding certain roles of males and females.

Comparing these findings with earlier U.S. studies (e.g., Elasmr et al., 1999; Glascock, 2001; Greenberg & Colette, 1997; Seggar et al., 1981; Vande Berg & Streckfuss, 1992) it can be seen that in both countries, females were underrepresented in fiction programs but that their relative share increased over time. Signorielli and Bacue (1999) found that the proportion of female characters in prime time television characters almost doubled between 1967 and 1996, after which there was decrease in 1998. In comparison, this study found that in 1995, 38% of all characters in the sample were female, comparable to the results of Signorielli

and Bacue (1999) and Elasmr et al. (1999). However, after 1995, the female character population increased, which was contrary to their findings. Furthermore, several American studies (e.g., Davis, 1990; Greenberg et al., 1980; Signorielli & Bacue, 1999) revealed that female characters remain younger than male characters. It was found that female characters are younger than male characters, and that this difference was more pronounced in American than in Dutch programs; that the activities of nearly one third of female characters in both American and Dutch programs was related to a job, lower than with male characters. Lastly, there were very few male or female characters who were clearly gay, lesbian, or bi-sexual. This could not be compared with earlier American studies, since there were few studies that looked at the non-heterosexuality of characters (Fisher et al., 2007).

This study focused only on the presence of gender-related subjects in Dutch television, and not to the manner of presentation. Further research could qualitatively analyze the specific dramatic representations as well. However, the comparative and historical approach contributes to the existing research literature on gender portrayals in television fiction. If more studies were to use this focus in the future, one could get a better insight into the similarities and differences of mediated gender portrayals in a global context.

Notes

¹ Author's analysis on data collection within the framework of a longitudinal survey project on Social and Cultural Changes in the Netherlands (SOCON). This project started in 1979 and is repeated every 5 years since then. The scale (Cronbach's Alpha = 0,674) is constituted of four items (V0234-V0237). For example: "It is not really as important for a girl to get a good education as it is for a boy" (V0235).

² 1990: Nederland 1, 2 and 3 and RTL 4. 1995: Nederland 1, 2 and 3, RTL 4 and 5, VTV/Kindernet, Veronica and SBS 6. 2000: Nederland 1, 2 and 3, RTL 4 and 5, Net 5, Fox, Veronica and SBS 6. 2005: Nederland 1, 2, and 3, RTL4, RTL5, RTL7, SBS6, Net5, Nickelodeon/Talpa, Veronica.

References

- Atkin, D. J., Moorman, J., & Lin, C. A. (1991). Ready for prime-time—Network series devoted to working women in the 1980s. *Sex Roles*, 25(11–12), 677–685.
- Boeke, H., & Kuipers, D. (1993). *Research results for 1992 of the Portrayal Department*. Hilversum: NOS Bureau Beeldvorming m/v
- Bouwman, H. (1987). *Televisie als cultuurschepper*. Amsterdam: VU Uitgeverij.
- Breedveld, K., van den Broek, A., de Haan, J., Harms, L., Huysmans, F., & van Ingen, E. (2006). *De tijd als spiegel. Hoe Nederlanders hun tijd besteden*. Den Haag: SCP [Social Cultural Planning Office]
- Davis, D. M. (1990). Portrayals of women in prime-time network television: Some demographic characteristics. *Sex Roles*, 23(5–6), 325–332.
- De Bens, E. & De Smaele, H. (2001). The inflow of American television fiction on European broadcasting channels revisited. *European journal of communication*, 16(1), 51–76.

- Eie, B. (1998). *Screening gender. Who speaks in television? A comparative study of female participation in television programmes*: NRK.
- Elasmar, M., Hasegawa, K., & Brain, M. (1999). The portrayal of women in U.S. prime-time television. *Journal of Broadcasting and Electronic Media*, 43(1), 20–34.
- Fisher, D. A., Hill, D. L., Grube, J. W., & Gruber, E. L. (2007). Gay, lesbian, and bisexual content on television: A quantitative analysis across two seasons. *Journal of Homosexuality*, 52(3–4), 167–188.
- Gerbner, G., & Gross, L. (1976). Living with television: The violence profile. *Journal of Communication*, 26(2), 173–199.
- Gerbner, G., Gross, L., Jackson-Beeck, M., & Signorielli, N. (1978). Cultural indicators: violence profile no. 9. *Journal of Communication*, 28(3), 176–207.
- Gerbner, G., Gross, L., Morgan, M., Signorielli, N., & Shanahan, J. (2002). Growing up with television: cultivation processes. In J. Bryant & D. Zillmann (Eds.), *Media effects: Advances in theory and research* (pp. 43–67). Mahwah, New Jersey: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
- Glascok, J. (2001). Gender roles on prime-time network television: Demographics and behaviors. *Journal of Broadcasting & Electronic Media*, 45(4), 656–669.
- Grant Thornton International Business Owners Survey (2004). *Senior management still a male preserve*. Retrieved 16 March, 2009, from: <http://www.grantthorntonibos.com/Press-room/2004/senior-management.asp>
- Greenberg, B. S. (1980). *Life on television. Content analyses of U.S. TV drama*. Norwood, New Jersey: Ablex Publishing Corporations.
- Greenberg, B. S., & Collette, L. (1997). The changing faces on TV: A demographic analysis of network television's new seasons, 1966–1992. *Journal of Broadcasting and Electronic Media*, 41(1), 1–13.
- Greenberg, B. S., Simmons, K. W., Hogan, L., & Atkin, C. K. (1980). The demography of fictional TV characters. In B. S. Greenberg et al. (Ed.), *Life on television: Content analyses of U.S. TV drama*. Norwood, NJ: Ablex Pub. Corp.
- Huysmans, F., de Haan, J., & van den Broek, A. (2004). *Achter de schermen. Een kwart eeuw lezen, luisteren, kijken en internetten*. Den Haag: SCP.
- Keuzenkamp, S., & Bos, D. (2007). *Out in the Netherlands. Acceptance of homosexuality in the Netherlands*. The Hague: The Netherlands Institute for Social Research (SCP).
- Koeman, J., Peeters, A., & D'Haenens, L. (2007). Diversity Monitor 2005. Diversity as a quality aspect of television in the Netherlands. *Communications—the European Journal of Communication Research*, 32(1), 97–121.
- Kuipers, G. (2008). De VS in Europese huiskamers. America in European living rooms: American television programmes and national media landscapes in four European countries. *Sociologie*, 4(2–3), 174–194.
- Lauzen, M. M., Dozier, D. M., & Horan, N. (2008). Constructing gender stereotypes through social roles in prime-time television. *Journal of Broadcasting & Electronic Media*, 52(2), 200–214.
- McNeil, J. C. (1975). Feminism, femininity, and television series: Content-analysis. *Journal of Broadcasting*, 19(3), 259–271.
- Neuendorf, K. A. (2002). *The Content Analysis Guidebook*. Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications.
- Niphuis-Nell, M. (Ed.). (1997). *Sociale atlas van de vrouw. Deel 4. Veranderingen in de primaire leefstijl*. Rijswijk: SCP.
- NPO (2008). Monitor diversiteit op de Nederlandse televisie. Volwassenen 2005 en kinder-programmering 2006. Retrieved September 30, 2008, from <http://portal.omroep.nl/nossites?nav=mgzkwCsHjCqBfEnCgEjE>
- SCP (The Netherlands Institute for Social Research). (1975–2000). *Tijdsbestedingsonderzoek*. Retrieved May 7, 2008, from <http://www.scp.nl/onderzoek/tbo/tabellen/default.asp>
- Seggar, J. F. (1975). Imagery of women in television drama: 1974. *Journal of Broadcasting*, 19(3), 273–282.
- Seggar, J. F., Hafen, J., & Hannonen-Gladden, H. (1981). Television's portrayals of minorities and women in drama and comedy drama, 1971–1980. *Journal of Broadcasting*, 25(3), 277–288.

- Signorielli, N., & Bacue, A. (1999). Recognition and respect: A content analysis of prime-time television characters across three decades. *Sex Roles, 40*(7–8), 527–544.
- Signorielli, N., & Kahlenberg, S. (2001). Television's world of work in the nineties. *Journal of Broadcasting & Electronic Media, 45*(1), 4–22.
- Sterk, G., & Van Dijk, B. (2003). *Monitor diversiteit 2002*. Hilversum: Publieke omroep.
- Stichting de Beauvoir & VSNU (2006). *Monitor Vrouwelijke hogleraren*. Retrieved: 16 March, 2009, from: www.stichtingdebeauvoir.nl/PDF-artikelen/Monitor%202006.pdf
- Vande Berg, L. R., & Streckfuss, D. (1992). Prime-time television's portrayal of women and the world of work: A demographic profile. *Journal of Broadcasting & Electronic Media, 36*(2), 195–208.
- Wester, F., & Weijers, A. (2006). Narratieve analyse en transcriptie; culturele thema's in de sitcom. In F. Wester (Ed.), *Inhoudsanalyse: Theorie en praktijk*. Waddinxveen: Kluwer.